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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 001737

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TAGS: PREL MASS EG

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND DEFMIN TANTAWI DISCUSS
INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

REF: STATE 43880

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4(b) and(d).

¶1. (C) The Ambassador and Defense Minister Tantawi discussed the International Medical Center's treatment of third country nationals during their March 19 meeting (septel). Tantawi's senior advisor, MG Fouad Abdel Halim, told the Ambassador and Field Marshal that the MoD understands that State's PM Bureau will notify Congress of the apparent violation. MG Fouad also said that MoD cannot pay USD 35 million to buy back the FMF-purchased equipment for the purpose of nationalizing the IMC. He instead offered USD 15 million, but said the MoD could consider going as high as USD 20 million. MG Fouad noted that "only" four percent of the IMC's patients are non-Egyptian and said the facility loses approximately 17 million USD per year. He then advised that the MoD would continue to treat third country nationals (at the same level) during 2006. He noted that if the number of non-Egyptian patients increased above current levels, MoD will notify the USG.

¶2. (C) Drawing on reftel talking points, the Ambassador underscored the reasons why the IMC should stop treating third country nationals. He reiterated that State PM had wanted to have this assurance before notifying Congress of the violation. Tantawi did not respond to the Ambassador's request and instead noted that MoD had been clear from the outset that it wanted to treat third country nationals at IMC. Noting that we are just talking about "medical care," Tantawi said there will be a way to resolve this.

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